

Advisory board meeting 7 December 2022

Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg



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Reciprocal, interdisciplinary and transparent: Provenance research with a restitution prospect in a colonial context



On the appropriate handling of a collection of human remains, using the example of the Alexander Ecker Collection in Freiburg



Agenda

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1. Welcome – matters arising?
2. Historical Research within the project
– update/presentation
3. Final conference –
preparation/planning
4. What is on the website: internal and
openly accessible parts
5. Miscellaneous

1. Welcome

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Welcome to our last meeting in 2022, one more to come in early 2023 before the final conference...

Approval of minutes

2. Historical Research within the project

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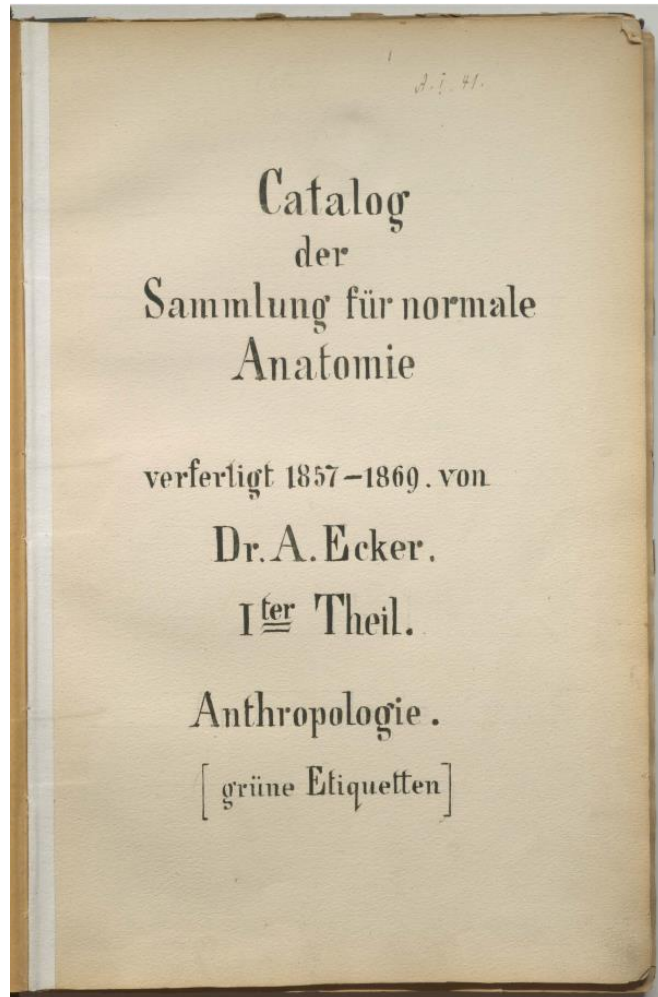
Dieter Speck will present background of the collection and go into detailed findings which in turn raise many more questions – particularly of appropriate handling.

Implication of historiographic findings

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Some basic chronological orientation

- 1857 establishment of the collection
- 1862 acquisition of the Bilharz Collection
- 1872 acquisition of the Schreiber Collection
(archaeological, exclusively from Germany)
- since the 1880s collection in twilight
- 1907 Eugen Fischer became curator of the collection, renewed interest
Collection activities in the colonies
- 1917 Great damage in World War I, no documentation of the losses
- 1927 Fischer goes to Berlin
- 1935 Addition of the Gabriel von Max collection without documentation
- 1944 Great damage in World War II, Destruction of almost all files (anatomy department and collection)
- 1907-1986 no inventory
- 2019 Inventory 1858-1907 found; Impetus for provenance research

Overview of the presumed African provenances

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Provenienzen	total	before 1879	after 1879
Friedrich Mook	23	x	
Karl Alfred Zittel	2	x	
Wilhelm Schimper	1	x	
Theodor Bilharz	49	x	
Alfons Bilharz	1	x	
Leven	2	x	
Julius Lederle	1	x	
Albert Schinzinger	2	x	
Hermann Haas	15	x	
Carl Rosset	12	x	
Carl von Nägeli	1	x	
Wilhelm Hillebrand	9	x	
Hans Dominik	5		x
Bernhard von Beck	1		x
Paul Langerhans	1		x
Albert Hoffa	1		x
Eugen Fischer	11		x
Gustav Jacobs	2		x
Karl Deninger	1		x
Wilhelm Thiersch	1		x
Gabriel von Max	21		
Keine Kenntnisse	17		

- Most provenance. Adventurers, explorers, collectors, individualists
- No information on 17 or 9%
- Blue: period of formal German colonialism 19 or 10 % German colonies: (14 x Namibia - already repatriated, 5 x Cameroon)
- 5 x same time, but not from German colonies

All others are “special cases” (we will have to talk about one cranium from Togo and one from East Africa)

- This is a university collection that predates the formal colonial period.
- Only a few human remains from the period 1900-1920 entered the collection.
- The majority of crania in this collection were “acquired” before formal German colonisation, in those cases we do not expect any involvement of (German!) colonial authorities
- a particular relevance may be associated with the personality of Eugen Fischer (science of race), so 19 crania came from Namibia and Cameroon !

Example 1

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Example 1

M0001/0710 - Cranium from Cameroon

UAF B473/1 – Auszug

880	129	Gräberschädel der Makabevöl- kerung". Kamerun.		Gesch. im Namen des Hauptmann Dominik, geschickt von Regierungsrat Dr. Haberer, Yaoundé Kamerun, 1907.
881	130	Kez.		Kez.
882	131	"		"
883	132	"		"
884	133	"		"
885	134	"		"

Grave skull of Maka people, Cameroon

Gift in the name of Captain Dominik, sent by government physician Prof. Dr. Haberer, Yaoundé Cameroon 1907

Anthropological observation

The archival and skeletal data agree on the provenance of the remains from West Africa, from a burial environment and the sex of the individual.

Example 2 (part1)

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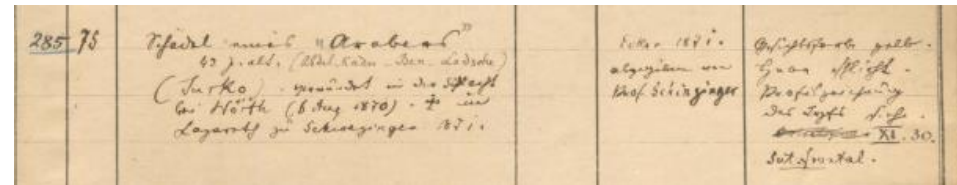


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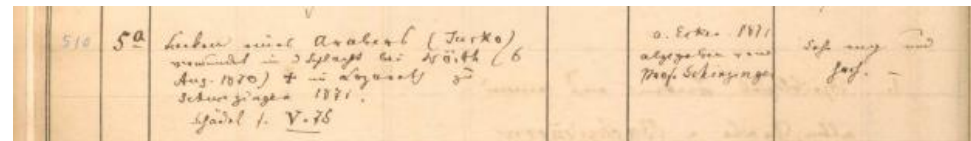
M0001/0674 and 1545 Cranium and pelvis, Arab

Auszug aus UAF B473 / 1 (Inventar)

Inv.Nr.	Nr. d. Catalogs	Bezeichnung	Erwerb
285	75	Schädel eines Arabers 42 J alt (Abdel-Kadn-Ben-Ladsche) (Turko) verwundet in der Schlacht bei Wörth (6.Aug. 1870), + im Lazareth zu Schwetzingen 1871	Ecker 1871, abgegeben von Prof. Schinzinger
285	05 0075	M0001/0674.	



Inv.Nr.	Nr. d. Catalogs	Bezeichnung	Erwerb
510		Becken eines Arabers (Turko) verwundet in d. Schlacht bei Wörth (6. Aug. 1870) + in Lazareth zu Schwetzingen 1871 Schädel s. V 75 = 05 0075	A. Ecker 1871 abgegeben von A. Schinzinger
510	09 0005	M0001/1545	



3. (5a) Männliches Becken. Araber (zum Schädel der Abtheilung V, Nr. 75 gehörig).
Maasse (desgl.): 1) 17,8. 2) 9,7. 3) 10,5. 4) 10,2. 5) 9,3. 6) 9,0.

Example 2 (part 2)

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Acquisition

The pelvis and crania are of 42-year-old Abdel-Kadn-Ben-Ladsche (b. c. 1829), who was wounded at Wörth on Aug. 6, 1870, transferred to Mannheim on Oct. 15, and died at the Schwetzingen military hospital on Nov. 16, 1870.

According to the report of Albert Schinzinger he was also autopsied. The further course can only be inferred, according to which the surgeon and university teacher Albert Schinzinger probably brought the preparations with him when he was appointed to Freiburg and left them to Alexander Ecker for his collection in 1871.

Colored foot soldiers of the French colonial army were called Turko. The units consisted of Algerian and Tunisian regiments, which were officially called Tirailleurs algériens. They were formed after the conquest of North Africa natives.

Albert Schinzinger (* 2.2.1827 in Freiburg i.B. + 24.7.1911 in Freiburg)

Studies in Freiburg and Vienna, 1850 doctorate, 1853 habilitation, 1870-1871 physician in the reserve hospital Schwetzingen and since 1871 professor of surgery, 1886 chief physician of St. Josef's Hospital in Freiburg, 1902 Privy Councillor, 1890 retirement.

anthropological observations

Cranial and archival information agree on the origin of this individual from North Africa.

Example 3

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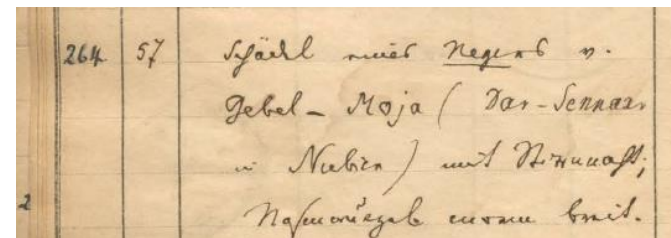


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M0001/0647 Cranium from Gebel-Moja (Dar Sennar in Nubia)

Catalog der anthropologischen Sammlungen der Universität: nach dem Stande vom 1. April 1878 /
zusammengestellt von Alexander Ecker, S.37, Schädel von Eingeborenen Africa's:

57. Neger von Gebel-Moja (Dar-Sennaar in Nubien).
C. B. *Cranium* mit Stirnnaht; Nasenwurzel enorm breit.
Cap. 1650. L 189. B 147. H 141. C 548. Sb 134. Schb 141. Hb 105. Gb 380.
Bas. 109. O. L 20. J. B 120. P 89.
L: B 77,7. L: H 74,6. B: H 95,9. N. I 62.
Abgebildet und beschrieben von J. Lederle: Archiv für Anthrop. Bd. VIII, S. 177, Taf. XII.



Acquisition

Part of the Billharz collection,

"From sick people who died in the hospital, however, come these skulls. The soldiers of the Pasha, for that is what most of them were who came to the hospital, are now partly stolen, partly bought slaves, or they are voluntary mercenaries, real condottieri, or they are the military conscripts drafted after the introduction of the new military law"

Theodor Bilharz (*23.3.1825 in Sigmaringen + 9.5.1862 in Cairo)

studied medicine in Freiburg and Tübingen, later director of medical affairs by the viceroy / Pasha of Egypt, chief of the medical clinic in Cairo, 1856-1862 professor of anatomy. He died in Cairo.

anthropological observations

All available evidence suggests that the remains belong to a male. To this corroborate all skeletal and archival data.

Example 4

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M0001/1567

Cranium with brown coloration, without indication of origin

Label "W. Thiersch"



Erwerb:

There is no archival information, no mention in the inventory

Circumstantial evidence suggests that it was collected by Wilhelm Thiersch and passed on to his cousin, the Freiburg archaeologist Hermann Thiersch, who placed it in the Freiburg collection between 1905 and 1918.

According to the information from the diary of Hermann Thiersch:
Skull of a fallen Mahdist from Wadi Halfa, found March 23, 1900

anthropological observations

The various methods for assessing ancestry result in African (Black and Egyptian) and European (Austrian) ancestries possible.

Question: How to deal with such a case ?

Example 5

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M0001/0718 Cranium marked „Timbuktu, Mali“

Notice: „Afrika, Tombucto. Timbuktu A.J.c. III Jacob Doctory Koffie 1734“

Label: "Jacob Doctory" Koffie, 40 Jahre alt



letter

De Neger Jacob Doctory Koffie. is in het Jaar 1816 van de kust van Guinaa
tenwaarts gevoerd met nog 15 a 20 Negerd. - Zy waren door groote beloften, aan boord
gelokt om het Schip te helpen tenwaarts brengen, en zouden als vrije lieden behandelt
en terug gezonden worden: - de afschaffing van den Slavenhandel was hem bekend. -
Weinig tyd na dat zij in Lee waren, mochten zij ope, dat wanneer hen Schepen, en
byzonder zulke die Engelseke Vlag voerden, naderden, alle Livaaten naar beneden
gezonden werden, en niet weder op het dek werden toegelaten, voor dat zoodanig
Scheep geheel uit het gezicht was. - Dit gedrag wekte by hem argwaan op. -
die vermeenderde toen zij de Engelseke kust naderende een Schip ontmoeten, dat
eenige seinen uitschelde; - waarop een sloep onder anderen ook met eenige negers
bemand, werd uitgezekt. - by hetzelve aan boord voer, maar zonder negers terug kwam.
In het kanaal werd hem niet veroorloofd op 't dek te komen, en in de volle Noordzee
ontmoeten zy andermmaal een schip, met het wech op de zelfde wijze gehandelt werd.
Hiendoor was hem getal xes ver verminderd dat men in Sepel niet kon vermoeden
dat zich meerder dan het benodigd getal negers aan boord bevond, terwijl zy niet
aan wal gelaten werden, en nothans weder hem tyd tot tyd iemand verdween. -

anthropological observations

All anthropological methods besides morphoscopy corroborate the origin of the remains from Africa. Craniometric analysis however suggests the place of origin could be traced in East rather than West Africa.

Example 6

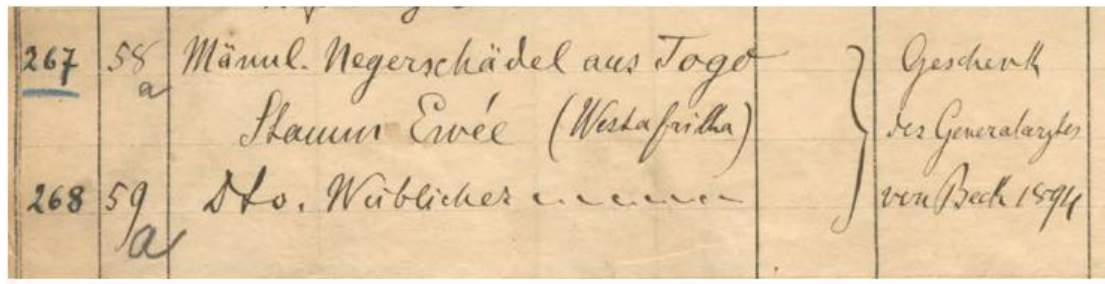
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M0001/716

UAF B473/1, S. 80



Inv.Nr.	Nr. d. Catalogs	Bezeichnung des Gegenstandes	Art der Aufbewahrung	Erwerb	Bemerkungen
267	58a	Männl. Negerschädel aus Togo Stamm <u>Ewée</u> (Westafrika)		Geschenk des Generalarztes von Beck 1894	

The information in the inventory is:

Male Cranium from Togo, tribe Ewee, Gift by the General Doctor von Beck 1894

According to the archival records in the University Archives, two crania from Togo were donated to the University by Beck in 1889

Anthropological observations

cranometric characteristic related to western Africa.

Example 7

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M0001/1570

No information in inventory

Inscription on mandible "R.V. 2150" and "Wahehe"

Inscription on skull:

"Wahehe (mit Skelett) R.V. 2150 Mhehe [männlich] Dr. H. Simon in Kilwa geschenkt 1894"

Label: "R.V. 2150" and "Wahehe".

"Wahehe (with skeleton) R.V. 2150 Mhehe [male] Dr. H. Simon in Kilwa donated 1894
The cranium was not part of the Freiburg collection, not in inventory

Probably the cranium came to Freiburg after 1945 (?) and was part of the Berlin collection. We know that the skeleton without cranium is in Berlin. We are looking for a contact to reunite the skeleton and the cranium in order to repatriate.

Is this the right way ? Or what is the best way to act ?



Questions – we need advice...

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- Only example 1 from Cameroon is a relatively clear case - even if current evidence suggest that the cranium was buried before being excavated and taken without consent, we can assume a context of violence.
- Example 2 raises fully other questions: What do we do with a French colonial soldier originating from North Africa and dying in Germany ? Would we have to involve French authorities?
- Example 3 how to treat the Bilharz collection ? The collection originated apparently from collectors at the service of the Ottoman Empire. Many human remains come from Egypt and North Africa and cannot be specifically assigned.
- What about establishing contacts with relatively frequently mentioned (supposed) places of origin - Tunisia, Sudan, Canary Islands (no German colonies)?

Questions...

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- Example 4 exemplifies still another problem: what do we do if we have only guesses and no concrete clues ?
- Considering the characteristics of the collection (as already explained): Who will be held responsible (restitution/repatriation, commemorative policies, possibly reparations) if the central authorities (Germany or Baden) were hardly involved ?
- Is the colonial context essential or maybe – in some cases - also slavery ? Example 5 - Jakob Doctorii Koffie - he was enslaved first by Africans, then by Europeans. Koffie did not want to go back to Africa and stayed in the Netherlands. He certainly deserves a burial, but where ? In Europe where he wanted to stay ? In the Netherlands or here in Freiburg?
- Example 6 How and when did the crania come to Freiburg ? What means „Togo“ (and Ewe) today, could it be Ghana’s Eastern part/Volta region ?
-

Questions...

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- Example 7 Skeleton in Berlin, Crania in Freiburg. How to proceed ? Bring Crania and Skeleton together and subsequently repatriate to Tanzania ?

What is the best way forward ?

3. Final conference

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Basic concept: Two days conference

First day – mostly internal (to be held at ABI)

Second day – outreach (preferably at the University, potentially old anatomy amphitheatre at FRIAS – not the one used by Alexander Ecker, to be sure...)

Date: second half of April – semester in Freiburg should have started. Preferences? We have to fix this soonest.

Further participants (suggestions)

- German Lost Arts Foundation (Fründt, Förster)
- Ministry of Culture, Arts and Research Baden-Württemberg (Frenz) ?
- Interested members of ACT, DeColoniality Now (U Freiburg)
- Representatives of other projects (e.g Tübingen, Berlin. Göttingen)

More finegrained suggestion Day 1

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Opening (Andreas)

Taking stock: what did we achieve, what not yet – consolidated reports from within the project (Dieter, Ursula, Andreas) – followed by Q+A

Film

Lunch at ABI

The Advisory Board and Reciprocal Research

What did we learn from such a pilot project?

Early Dinner at ABI – transfer to University

Public Lecture („Freiburg Africa Talk“), one member of the Advisory Board – somebody volunteering?

to be held at FRIAS (?)

Outreach: Bringing in Tunisia, Sudan, eventually Gabon (hybrid Workshop, needs good preparation for newcomers)

The Way forward – final discussion

Lunch at FRIAS

Ceremonial Handing over of Policy Paper (Annex) to Rector Prof. Kerstin Krieglstein, main part to representative of the ministry.

Eventually Ceremony of Mourning? (Who could be a valid MC? Pater Deogratias Maruhikiro/Burundi?)

4. What is on the website: internal and openly accessible parts

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<https://act.uni-freiburg.de/en/reciprocal-provenance-research/internal-area>

To access the restricted area, type:
Kulturverluste

Did you check?

Observations?

This is the basis for further scientific work...

5. Miscellaneous

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Next meeting Early February ? Or only beginning of March ?



Thanks for attending, for questions and contributions!